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ABSTRACT

The narrative conventions of romance which flourish in Lawrence Cremin's "Transformation of the School" show that stylization does occur in historical writings. People often talk about stylization in visual forms; but stylization in the verbal arts is relatively undefined. To structure his recounting of the progressive story, Cremin drew on the genre of romance. Aspects of the genre upon which the coherence of his book depend include: (1) the motif of amnesia; (2) the polarized moral universe in which the dramatic action takes place, along with the characteristically abrupt nature of the narrative movement within it; (3) the adventure quest at the center of the action; and (4) its ideal of heroism. The irony of the situation is that, for the last 20 years, we have all been quoting Walt Whitman with a moralizing flourish: "There is no more need for romance," we say with the poet from Camden, "Let facts and history be properly told." Meanwhile, the narrative conventions of romance flourished unrecognized in "The Transformation of the School," a book widely hailed as the premier example of the explanatory dividends which a revivified, academically respectable history of education had to offer. (RM)

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Ironies of the Romance and the Romance with Irony: Some Notes on Stylization in the Historiography of American Education Since 1960

Presented to the Joint Meeting of the Canadian History of Education Association and the History of Education Society (U.S.)
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Vancouver, British Columbia

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> What is given here is not a "result," nor even a "method" (which would be too ambitious and would imply a scientific view of the text that I do not hold), but merely "a way of proceeding."
>
> --Roland Barthes

> In my experience people worried about reading in, or over-interpretation, or going too far, are...typically afraid of getting started, of reading as such, as if afraid that texts -- like people, like times and places — mean things and moreover mean more than you know. This is accordingly a fear of something real, and it may be a healthy fear.... Still, my experience is that most texts, like most lives, are underread, not overread.
>
> —Stanley Cavell

I

Because stylization is easy to see in the visual arts, their example furnishes the most appropriate place for us to begin this morning. Consider these two simple cases suggested by Helen Vendler.

> The deer on the belt buckle is recognizably a deer, but it has been curved into an oval shape, its legs bent under its body, its neck elongated and tucked toward its breast, its shoulders folded to conform to the left side of the buckle, its flanks curved to align themselves with the right side. It is a deer, but no deer was ever seen to curl itself up in so symmetrical a way; and yet the forms have not been stretched out of plausibility entirely. On the facades of Gothic cathedrals the vertical body of the saint is still a body, though stretched and stylized into something resembling a column. In visual forms, the mimetic is subdued to the geometric with such grace that the geometric seems almost an invention of the mimetic -- as though the deer had found an

> oval way of being a deer, the saint a columnar way of being a body.

This melding of the geometric and the mimetic is less personal in origin and more pervasive in its effects than the term "style" customarily suggests. Like "genre" — like "tradition" -- the concept of stylization rings a bell for conformity, and so it requires a different kind of analytical thinking cap. We tend to individualize works of art straightaway, treating them as free-standing monuments to their makers vision unbeholden to convention or formula. Stylization resists this tendency, inviting us to reckon with fundamental regularities which inform our mimetic efforts, whether they prove to be successful or not. As Vendler's examples suggest, these regularities (the geometric) are neither gratuitous decorations nor disguises for the real (the deer and the saint). They are internal and indispensable to representations and the satisfactions we take in them. Style, we might say, is fully intelligible only against the cultural and historical possibilities furnished by the traditions of stylization more generally. The hallmark of a powerful individual style, we might say further, lies in its capacity for testing and ultimately revising our sense of the limitations and possibilities which stylization affords in any particular medium.[1]

Understood in this way, stylization is a vast topic and a puzzling one. Easy enough to see in the visual arts, stylization is by no means easy to talk about, and I still know of no better way of summarizing the topic's difficulties (or the point of facing them) than that delightful cartoon which E.H. Gombrich borrowed years ago from the pages of The New Yorker to introduce his lectures on Art & Illusion. Many of you are familiar with it, I'm sure. The cartoonist has imagined a life-drawing class in ancient Egypt. We see a group of young men in the stone-slab studio, their heads

shaven, naked but loin cloths, huddled in concentration at the feet of a nude female model. She stands erect above them, a figure from the walls of some pharoah's tomb come to life -- her feet, legs, hands and head held in stiff ceremonial profile, her torso rotated to the front. Some of the students are looking down at their as yet unfinished sketches, but several others are looking up, caught in art's classic gesture of mimetic intent: they are taking their model's measure, each sighting with one eye along the length of an arm extended past their thumb pointed vertically. Here one cannot help but wonder with a smile why it is "that different ages and different nations have represented the visible world in such different ways." What aspects of these differences are attributable to differences in skill and differences in perception? And how do these intersect with other differences in schema or formulae of representation? Afterall, though we like to think that where there is a will there is a way, "in matters of art," as Gombrich reminds us, "the maxim should read that only where there is a way is there a will."[2]

Notwithstanding the formidable obstacles to talking about stylization in visual forms, I think it safe to say that art history has had an impressive degree of success. Indeed by comparison, stylization in the verbal arts is relatively undefined. Difficulties abound even in poetry, Vendler tells us, in part because the most obvious forms (rhyme and meter) have proven to be the least profitable to discuss. This situation helps set the agenda for literary criticism. Since so much thematic material is repetitiously commonplace, the task for criticism lies in finding words for the various kinds and degrees of stylization the reader encounters -- modes of stylization which experienced readers sense immediately but cannot easily articulate.[3]

II

But now with these preliminaries aside let's take up the historiographical case which interests us this morning. I have two questions I would like to pose here. Let's take the easy question first: Is there any conception of stylization in force in our ordinary appraisals of historical writing? The answer, I take it, is "no." This is not to say that our picture of historical interpretation is as straightforward as the opening diagram in an elementary textbook on optics (Figure 1: Historical Reality; Figure 2: Historian; Figure 1': Completed Historical Work), but it is to say that our appraisals are literal-minded through and through. None of us believe that historians study the past with a naked eye, or that historical writing is a kind of stenography, a stock-clerk's tally of what the archive shows or tells. But in our discussions of the shape and character of various historical interpretations, we have as a rule nothing whatsoever to say about literary or rhetorical matters. We examine the writers use of evidence. Deploying the vocabulary of rational considerations, we speak of limitations in that evidence; generalizations that will not hold, and so on, chasing down those Historian's Fallacies which David Hackett Fischer attempted to catalogue some years ago. We also pay attention to the author's ideological or normative interests which, though presumably less rational and less obvious, are bound to drive interpretations in one favored direction or another. And finally, we may appeal to the prevailing climate of composition, whether setting the fashion within the guild, the mood within the nation as a whole, or some interest group within it.[4]

We can find illustrations of these three critical strategies deployed independently and in combination throughout the course of our historiogra-

phical proceedings since 1960. For my purposes today, though, cases in which the critics fire is directed at Ellwood P. Cubberley provide the most telling illustrations by far. David Tyack's remarks about a third of the way through The One Best System are fairly representative, I think.

> To Horace Mann and most of his successors as spokesmen for public education during the nineteenth century, the supporters of the common school were the children of light and opponents the children of darkness. Since the schools were the panacea for crime, poverty, and vice, to oppose them was to ally with evil. This tradition continued in influential writings of educational historians. Witness a classic statement in 1919 of the "alignment of interests" for and against public schools during the mid-nineteenth century:
>
> | For | Against |
> | --- | --- |
> | "Citizens of the Republic" | Belonging to the old aristocratic class |
> | Philanthropists and humanitarians | Politicians of small vision |
> | Public Men of large vision | The ignorant, narrow-minded and penurious |
> | The intelligent workingmen in the cities | The non-English-speaking classes |
> | "New-England men" | |
>
> Here is Elwood Cubberley's morality play presented as sober history.

This is one way in which an estimate of an author's ideological interest can successfully be combined with a view of the climate of composition to explain the character of a given historical interpretation. But Tyack's remarks also illustrate the limited but quite specific way in which literary considerations customarily enter our proceedings. Here the literary (the morality play) is flatly opposed to the historical. To spot a convention or a formula is to damn a piece of writing as history, not to praise it. Thus we may conclude that while there is irony aplenty in Tyack's remarks -- an irony deployed against romance -- there is certainly no working concept of stylization. Insofar as his remarks can be taken as representative, the same can be said for the field as a whole.[5]

Now for my second question which is more difficult to answer. If it's plausible to say we have no working concept of stylization, is this because we haven't learned as yet to speak about it, or is it because there is no stylization in historiography? I'm sure none of us would have difficulty multiplying examples of stylization as Vendler has illustrated it, or for that matter furnishing cases from further afield -- from the movies (the western, the musical), from fiction (the detective novel) or from music (the Baroque, blues, punk). But at the same time, many of us are bound to feel that the very act of looking for stylization in historiography is outrageously inappropriate. Why is this?

The deer gracing the buckle in Vendler's example, we might say, like the saint embellishing the column, carry none of the functional obligations of the buckle and the column themselves. Only when the buckle holds and the building stands, so to speak, are we free to indulge in the affirmation of distortion which stylization permits. Aesthetic (decorative) obligations are one thing, we might argue, the epistemological (the functional) another. Thus we might very well conclude that our hesitation or silence on the question of stylization in historiography is perfectly proper. We do not hesitate because we are in the presence of stylization but have difficulty finding the words for it. We hesitate because in order for history to be history, it requires fullness of representation without stylization. In this domain, though not when we deal with poetry, film or painting, our empirical responsibilities enjoin us to route out distortions and simplications as best we can. Though we may applaud a worthy "style" when we find it (by which we mean something like "writing up results" with lucidity and grace), we simply cannot afford to let stylization in the door. The accuracy of the para-

phrasable matter — the mimetic — is the main event in history, and this is as it should be.

Let me say in reply that ruling stylization out of bounds in this way is internal to what history is in the last quarter of the 20th century. As you might have guessed, I do not share this realist view, but neither do I regard it as obviously silly or unreasonable. All we need recognize here, first of all, is that the preferred view is in dispute (if not embattled) on several counts in different quarters with interesting results. Second, part of the basis for this dispute is historical. Our standing convictions about what history is go hand in hand with a family of others about what makes science different from art, for example, and what distinguishes high art from more popular forms. This broad family of distinctions as we know them now are moving — they're alive. Apart from the potential of these disputes to serve as a fresh stimulus for further work in the history of education, I think we're entitled to conclude that the broader, metahistorical question of stylization in historiography is now a wide open one. It remains to be seen what carrying-on responsibly in the historiographical tradition amounts to — whether history could come to grips with stylization in the name of that responsibility, and how it might do so.[6]

III

Is there any body of work ready-to-hand which systematically shoulders the question of stylization in historiography? Yes indeed there is — most significantly Hayden's White's. With far more subtlety than can be adequately acknowledged here, White conceives of stylization in history under four main headings: narrative structures, temporal orientations, modalities

of argument, and figures of speech. All of these represent the literary equivalents of the geometric in Vendler's example. Since narraitve is the most straightforward of the group and also of current interest within the profession, the remainder of my remarks this morning will focus there. Let me begin with some very general but essential ideas — three from Northrop Frye's theory of "generic plot structures" and three others from White. The reason for this approach is straightforward; White has borrowed Frye's conception of narrative form in fiction, and refashioned it to suit his own argumentative purposes. Against the backdrop of my general remarks about stylization, I would hope these ideas would make White's target (and my own) intuitively clear. Whether we think he hits it or not is, of course, another question, one that should be held separate from still other reservations about aiming at such a target at all.[7]

The three leading ideas from Frye I've chosen to emphasize are these. (1) No story, no narrative, is a straight line. It has shape and movement — the action "rises" and "falls," as we say. Moreover, a story's action is depicted within realms or settings. It may move in step with natural cycles like day and night, be set "above" the earth or "below" it, in worlds familiar or fantastically distorted. These differences in shape and realms together point us toward differences in narrative form. These forms carry with them stock characterizations, ideals of heroism and the like, as well as distinctive structural and thematic ways of inaugurating the dramatic action and terminating it. (2) Romance, Comedy, Tragedy and Satire name the four generic plot structures which together define the spectrum of our narrative tradition. Twin champions, respectively, of the ideal and the actual, these four modes exhaust the rudimentary narrative means at our disposal

for making synoptic sense out of the beginning, the middle and the end of things. They are the literary equivalents of rhythm and key in music, formally limited but artistically inexhaustible. (3) The conventions or rules of good story-telling are everywhere the same. Stories differ only in authority and social function. These conventions do not come from life, but from a self-contained literary universe -- from myth.[8]

The late John Gardner once insisted that "life is all conjunctions, one damn thing after another, cows and wars and chewing gum and mountains. Art -- the best, most important art," he continued, "is all subordination: guilt because of sin because of pain." This point is certainly familiar enough, and I think it represents one possible and largely acceptable conclusion we might draw from these schematic ideas I've borrowed from Frye. No individual lives a story, we might say, any more than a nation of individuals does. Stories are made, constructed, told, retold and heeded for purposes of gratification and renewal which are to varying degrees moral, aesthetic and intellectual. The more vexing difficulty lies in the nature and sources of those "subordinations" Gardner refers to -- whether one might, for example, be willing to venture far enough down the anti-realist road to say with William Gass: "The star-crossed lovers in books and plays are doomed, not because in the real world they would be, but because, far more simply, they are star-crossed." But let's set this tangle aside for we have another, more immediate question to face here. Suppose we are willing to seriously entertain a conception of stylization like Frye's for the case of fictions. What happens when we begin to scrutinize the realistic narratives of the historian? For his part, Hayden White would argue for principles like these. (1) Narrative form is a cognitive instrument like theory, like metaphor.

One way an historian explains or interprets his material is by telling a story of a particular kind. That is, the writer "emplots" the "found" data of the historical record in accord with the formal narrative constituents of Romance, Comedy, Tragedy and Satire. (2) The completed historical work points "in two directions simultaneously: "first, toward the set of events it purports to describe, and second, toward the generic story form to which it tacitly likens the set in order to disclose its formal coherence considered as either a structure or a process." (3) The story form is one index of the particular moral and esthetic sensibilities of the historian. For readers, who at least unconsciously recognize the generic narrative patterns, buried deep as they are in our cultural traditions, the story form establishes "the appropriate gravity and respect" with which they should treat the historical events reported in the narrative. That is, the plot structures do not tell us "what to think" but with "what force to think, and how precisely to situate the thinkable." Finally, insofar as our critical appraisal of an historical work is concerned, the first step ought to consist in displaying the formal narrative tactics upon which the book's explanatory effect depends. Until we consciously understand the kind and degree of stylization in any particular historical work, our assessments of its adequacy and reliability are bound to go off half-cocked.[9]

In the absence of a concrete illustration or two, White's transpositions of Frye in the name of what I've been calling stylization are bound to remain remote -- at best like the flashing and rumbling of a storm heard a good way off in the distance. So let me try to bring the spirit and the point of these reflections on stylization closer to home by displaying a bit of the narrative geometry which graces a work we are all familiar with --

Lawrence Cremin's Transformation of the School.

IV

"The substance of this volume," Cremin declares in his preface, is "the story of the progressive education movement." And when Cremin goes on to sketch that story's substance for his readers, naming and ordering its principle thematic moments and describing the story's shape and narrative direction, he draws a parabola, an inverted "U" like the mouth of tragedy on a classical theatrical mask. The story begins, he tells us, with the movement's "genesis in the decades immediately following the Civil War." It rises to a peak with "its gathering political momentum during the decade before World War I;" its "conquest of the organized teaching profession" and its "pervasive impact on American schools and colleges." "Fragmentation" marks the '20's and '30's, and with it a decline begins which bottoms out in "ultimate collapse" after World War II in a blather of "Life Adjustment." That this represents "the substance" of the volume there can be little doubt, but the "spirit" lies elsewhere, for the Transformation of the School is not a tragedy. If we pay close attention to the way in which Cremin recounts the history of progressivism, we find not a Tragedy, but a Romance. This observation helps explain what would otherwise be puzzling or perhaps unworthy of notice all together -- namely, that while the book begins and ends with the image of a funeral, we feel at its conclusion the quickening of life, the possibilities or rebirth and renewal.

"At the beginning of the romance," Frye observes, "there is often a sharp descent of social status, from riches to poverty, from privilege to a struggle to survive." This descent, "which has analogues to falling

asleep or entering a dream world," represents "at its structural core," he continues, "a loss or confusion or break in the continuity of identity." Listen to the way in which The Transformation begins.

> The death of the Progressive Education Association in 1955 and the passing of its journal, Progressive Education, two years later marked the end of an era in American pedagogy. Yet one would hardly have known it from the pitifully small group of mourners at both funerals. Somehow a movement that had for half a century enlisted the enthusiasm, the loyalty, the imagination, and the energy of large segments of the American public and the teaching profession became, in the decade following World War II, anathema, immortalized only in jokes that began, "There was this mixed-up youngster who went to an ultra-progressive school...."

These are Cremin's first words to his reader. In this image of funerals virtually no one attended, of "vitriolic attacks on John Dewey" by "people who had never read him" and so on, the reversal in the circumstances of the PEA and the movement it all too imperfectly embodied is clear enough. But more profoundly, I think, the reversal or descent Cremin has portrayed here is our own. In one sense, to be sure, these jokes are equivalent to our foolishness in allowing a "morality play" — "a simple story," as he puts it a bit further on — to be "confused" with "history." They simply point in different ways to the depths of our ignorance or misunderstanding of a now spent historical phenomenon called Progressivism. But this is by no means an image of ordinary ignorance or misunderstanding. By styling the movement as one which for fifty years was definative of the nation in view of the "enthusiasm," the "loyalty," the "imagination" and the "energy" which it successfully enlisted, he draws a moral equation between our misunderstanding of Progressivism and a misunderstanding of ourselves. We as readers are not portrayed in a world of general accord, enthusiasm, and good humor when the book begins, but a world divided, one in which jokes are as anxiety-

ridden as they are uncomprehending, where "rhetoric and jargon" prevail, and where ersatz history has "fed mercilessly on the fears of anxious parents and the hostilities of suspicious conservatives." Thus our failure to mourn, like our "confusion" of "morality plays" with "history," represents nothing less than a potentially catastrophic loss of national identity. This "motif of amnesia," as Frye terms it, is the first emblem of the narrative conventions of the Romance upon which Cremin's volume depends. In keeping with those conventions, once again, the book seeks to restore that lost identity -- to break the spell of amnesia -- and thereby fulfill the first indispensable condition for the renewal and resurgence of "an authentic progressive vision of reform," one which Cremin notes at the book's conclusion "remains strangely pertinent to the problems of mid-century America."[10]

Of course Cremin does not drop this "motif of amnesia" on the reader's plate at the outset of The Transformation, only to leave it there to lie inertly for 350 pages. Called upon in the preface to establish our moral bearings in the present with respect to the past, as well as to certify the motive and ambition of the book itself, Cremin reinstates the motif several times, most significantly to structure his account of Progressivism's fortunes after World War I. In chapter 6, "Scientists, Sentimentalists, and Radicals," for example, amnesia and its costs are dramatized in the estrangement of the variety of high-minded theoretical interests which flowed together "with minor inconsistencies" before the War, only to face one another as antagonistic and mutually incomprehensible sects in the decades which followed. In (Chapter 7) "The Organization of Dissent," we find it played-out once again in the short-sighted organizational initiatives of Stanwood Cobb and "a number of like-minded Washington ladies" who acted in 1919 in

utter ignorance of the pre-war movement or its scope. As Progressivism became internally incoherent, no longer intelligible to itself because it had become forgetful of itself, Progressivism all but inevitably became unintelligible to the larger public and vulnerable to caricature. Since "the decisive forces in American educational history" lie "in the political process by which the public defines the commitments of the schools" -- a moral enterprise, remember, which Cremin insists Mann set in motion in the 1840's -- the movement's undoing by the 1950's becomes at last fully comprehensible. No less importantly, however, we readers now know who we are. Informed, we are simultaneously transformed. We find ourselves in the Progressives -- in their social conscience, in their principled aspirations for democratic reform, in their mixed record of substantive results, but also in our common vulnerability to amnesia and the tyranny of circumstances. Released from the dream world in which we began, we are permitted to recognize that legacy we could not recognize before, and to that extent our lost identity has been restored. But in another, larger sense, our identity awaits us. The promise of American life remains unfulfilled, as it did in Mann's generation and Dewey's. We in the present must act if we are to claim our birthright, and in the context of The Transformation of the Schools, action can only mean submitting to the arduous, often disappointing business of coalition politics.[11]

I've dwelled on the "motif of amnesia" because it is indispensable to our understanding of both the narrative conventions of Romance and the interpretation of Progressivism we find in The Transformation. But while it may be indispensable, it is by no means decisive. No one feature of a genre, after all, is sufficient for a particular work's inclusion in the

genre. So let me try to strengthen my case a bit by touching briefly upon three other closely related aspects of the Romance upon which the coherence of the Cremin volume depends: the "polarized moral universe" in which the dramatic action takes place, along with the characteristically abrupt nature of the narrative movement within it; "the adventure quest" at the center of the action; and its ideal of heroism.

I said earlier that no plot is a straight line. More precisely, Comedy and Tragedy are parabolic, and each traces their ascending and descending action smoothly within a realm of "ordinary experience." Frye argues that the Romance, by contrast, bounces up and down dialectically between an idyllic world of wish-ful-fillment <u>above</u> ordinary experience and a night-world <u>below</u> it. This "powerful polarizing tendency" in the dramatic action of the Romance is triggered at the beginning of the story by the "motif of amnesia" we have already discussed. Identity lost sets up the necessity for recovering it — what Frye terms "the adventure quest."

Slogans, images, and stories which borrow in one way or another from these conventions of the Romantic universe are a staple of our everyday life. The élan of recruiting posters depends upon our understanding of these Romantic valences, for example. Think of the armed forces ("Join the Navy! It's Not Just a Job. It's An Adventure!"), of school teaching ("No One Ever Said Teaching Was Going to Be Easy") or those photos of student life which beckon from the pages of college and university catalogues. Think of the intense, (if not altogether deep) emotional roller-coaster world of the afternoon soap opera. Now consider for a moment the opening chapter of <u>The Transformation</u>. You should be able to hear the Romantic cadences — feel the abrupt movement between realms above and below ordinary

experience, and recognize the adventure-quest all set to work as an ensemble in the opening paragraph. It reads this way.

> The circulation of The Forum was climbing in 1892 — and no wonder. The stuffy, moribund New York monthly had suddenly sprung to life under the imaginative editorship of Walter Hines Page. Energetic, knowledgeable, uncompromising in his journalistic standards, the progressive young southerner was running article after article that the would-be conversationalist simply could not afford to miss: Henry Cabot Lodge and Jacob Schiff on politics, Jane Addams and Jacob Riis on social reform and William James on psycical research. Well-nigh anything The Forum printed was likely to be discussed, but Page himself never anticipated the controversy destined to arise over Joseph Mayer Rice's series on the schools.

This movement from "the stuffy" and the "moribund" to "life" is not gradual but "sudden" — a springing. Moreover, this life is no ordinary life as that imposing list of notables along with the breathless enthusiasm of The Forum readers ("simply could not afford to miss") suggests. Rice's name alone certainly jars us after that roll-call which begins with Lodge, but we are dropped unequivocally into a world "below" ordinary experience with the opening sentence of the next paragraph. "The year 1892 was much like any other," Cremin writes, "and Dr. Johnson's injunction about the fatal dullness of education was as pertinent as ever."

Let's pass over the two quest images which follow on the heels of this "fatal dullness." Although Rice's "searching questions," "questions so pressing he spent the period between 1888 and 1890 studying pedagogy at Jena and Leipzig," as well as his subsequent tour of 36 American cities for The Forum nicely augment the intimations of adventure-quest in the opening paragraph, I want to try and draw out the Romantic design and texture of the chapter's opening section as a whole. Rice's first article appeared in October, as you may recall, and "within a month he and Page

both knew they had taken an angry bull by the horns." We move from the muckraking expository tone of the first eight articles ("with alarming frequency the story was the same: political hacks hiring untrained teachers who blindly led their innocent charges..."), relived occasionally by "encouraging departures from the depressing rule," to "a call for action" in the ninth and final piece. Another quest image follows ("The way was simple....") and we learn that the response to Rice's series was "electric." Remember the reaction of the professional press? It ranged, Cremin writes, "from chilling distain to near hysteria." And what happened subsequently? "The fires...burned brightly into the summer of 1984 and then died down," though "Rice himself remained undaunted." When Rice died in 1934 "he was virtually unknown."

I trust you get the point. And if we were to examine the volume in detail, we would find Cremin drawing on Romantic symmetry like this time and again to structure his recounting of the Progressive story. We might say (echoing Vendler) in conclusion, that Progressivism is subdued to the formal conventions of Romantic narrative with such grace in The Transformation that the polarized moral universe, the up and down movement, amnesia and the quest all seem to be an invention of Progressivism and America itself. Of course this world is a demanding and potentially exhausting one since high-minded human efforts are always being out-flanked by "the march of events," and this leads us to the Romantic ideal of heroism. What else could it be but stamina, persistence, endurance...?[12]

V

What does this brief excursion into stylization have to suggest about

"the ironies of romance and romance with irony?" Romance is by no means a stranger to irony, as Cremin's volume illustrates so well, but I had a few points of a different order in mind.

I think we have been correct all along in insisting that Cubberley's Public Education was a Romance -- a "morality play," if you like. The rub is that we have remained tone-deaf to its rhetorical key. In effect, we have all been quoting Walt Whitman with a moralizing flourish for the last twenty years as a result: "There is no more need for romance," we say with the poet from Camden, "let facts and history be properly told." And meanwhile...? Meanwhile the narrative conventions of Romance flourished unrecognized in The Transformation of the School, a volume widely and deservedly hailed as the premier example of the explanatory dividends which a revivified, academically respectable history of education had to offer. If this recognition isn't sobering enough, another dawns here that might be: conventions of the Romance (though leavened often with Comedy) have been called upon tacitly time and again to emplot the revisionist story of our subspeciality as an heroic scholastic quest for a usable past.

Denouncing Romance, but unknowingly depending on it all the while, we have failed to give this modality its due. But by the same token, we are prone to give tragedy and satire entirely too much credit, courting them as if they were epistemologically privileged. These are but two narrative strategies among others -- nothing more, nothing less. They are not the givens of experience, but ways of taking experience. Necessary and useful as they are, tragedy and satire are never complete in themselves to the moral task of making narrative sense of our current life in the manifold variety of its relationships to the past.

Let me hasten to add in conclusion that stylization does not represent a "break-through." If anything, it represents an opportunity to go back and follow-through, recovering the rhetorical sources of responsible discursive practice which we left behind in the rush to positivism. There is a good deal of work to be done. Here I leave off and commend the topic to you.

NOTES

1. Roland Barthes, "The Struggle With The Angel," Image-Music-Text (New York, 1977), p. 127; Stanley Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage (Cambridge, 1981); Helen Vendler, "The Creeping Griffon," New York Review of Books 29 (Sept. 23, 1982).41-48. Several deeper issues side-stepped in this paper have been usefully discussed by Richard Rorty. Cf., e.g., "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism" in his Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980 (Minneapolis, 1982). One recent and clear example of the personalized approach to "style" in history which my emphasis on stylization seeks to avoid can be found in James Hoopes, "Art as History: Perry Miller's New England Mind," American Quarterly 34 (Spring, 1982):3-25. Closer to home but in a different key, cf., Martin Duberman's introduction to Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (New York, 1973) and Lawrence Veysey's review, Harvard Educational Review 43 (May, 1973):258-264. I realize, of course, that we are all familiar with visual representations which do not depend on the geometric distortions called upon by Vendler's example. From the standpoint of the argument in the paper, photographic realism is another form of stylization. Cf., e.g., Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York, 1977), particularly her remarks on Antonioni's documentary film on China, pp. 169-175.

2. E.H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study of the Psychology of Pictorial Representation (Princeton, 1960), pp. 3, 86.

3. Vendler, "The Creeping Griffon," p. 41.

4. David Hackett Fischer, Historian's Fallacies: Toward A Logic of Historical Thought (New York, 1970).

5. David Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge, 1974), p. 80. Cf., e.g., Carl F. Kaestle, "Conflict and Consensus Revisited: Notes Toward A Reinterpretation of American Educational History," Harvard Educational Review 46 (August, 1976): 390-396.

6. One gets a fine sense of this larger, trans-disciplinary discussion in the essays devoted to "The Politics of Interpretation," Critical Inquiry 9 (September, 1982). See also Hans Kellner, "A Bedrock of Order: Hayden White's Linguistic Humanism," History and Theory 19 (1980):1-29. The hopes for a "literary criticism of history" is not new, of course. Cf., e.g., David Levin's opening essay, In Defense of Historical Literature (New York: 1967).

7. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore, 1973). He has also published a collection of his essays under the title Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore, 1978). More recently he has contributed a piece to "The Politics of Interpretation" number of Critical Inquiry cited above. Northrop Frye's conception of "generic plot structures" is laid out in Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, 1957), pp. 158-239. On "The Place of Northrop Frye's 'Anatomy of Criticism'," see Frank Lentricchia's opening chapter in his After The New Criticism (Chicago, 1980).

8. Frye has been elaborating and expanding upon these ideas for many years. They appear in the Anatomy, cited above, and in The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, 1976) to name just two sources. I've gone over some of this ground before in previous essays, and interested readers will find fuller documentation there. On Romance, see "The Freedom We Have in Mind," a review essay of Maxine Greene's Landscapes of Learning, Educational Theory 28 (Winter, 1979) 77-83; and "Reading Histories of American Education," a review essay of Donald Warren, ed., History, Education, and Public Policy, Educational Theory 30 (Spring, 1980): 159-167. On Comedy, Tragedy and Satire, see "Myth, Educational Theory and the Figurative Imagination," Philosophy of Education, 1978 (Urbana, 1979): 227-238. For Frye set to use in the context of the newspaper story, see Michael Schudson, "Why News Is The Way It is," Ruritan Quarterly (Winter 1983):109-125.

9. John Gardner, On Moral Fiction (New York, 1977), p. 6; William Gass, "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction," Fiction and the Figures of Life (Boston, 1971), p. 20; Hayden White, "Interpretation in History," Tropics of Discourse, pp. 51-80. For fuller documentation of these ideas of White's, as well as an illustration of his conception of modalities of argument and figures of speech at work in the history of education literature, see my "Sense of Occasion," History of Education Quarterly 21 (Fall, 1981):347-365, a review essay of works by R. Freeman Butts and Geraldine J. Clifford.

10. Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York, 1961), preface, and p. 353.

11. Cremin, pp. 10, 184, 240, 273.

12. Cremin, pp. 3-8; Frye, The Secular Scripture, pp. 87-89. In the interests of simplicity of presentation, I've passed over two other earmarks of the Romance which appear in the Cremin volume: the characteristically ambiguous relationship between "reality" and the polarized realms, as well as the emphasis upon symbolic action. I have provided some illustrations of what's at issue under both of these headings in the essays devoted to the Greene and Warren volumes cited above. For further illustrations of the way in which Cremin reinstates the polarized moral universe, consider the relationship between sections two and three of Chapter 1 (in which we learn of "the genius of Mann's design," of the

problems he could not solve, and Harris' status as transitional figure), and the fourth which begins: "Whatever the high-minded philosophies that justified them, the schools of the 1890's were a depressing study in contrasts." See also Woodward's "Pyrrhic Vistory," p. 33-34; and the results of the Smith-Hughes Act, pp. 56-57. My original plan for this essay called for some discussion of Burton Bledstein's Culture of Professionalism (Norton, 1976) as Satire. The Satire is a parody of the Romance and we find all of the machinery of the Romantic univers at work (to different effect, of course) in Bledstein's representation of "the vertical vision" of the mid-Victorians.